

they build for their employees, a man who takes a well-paid job is often putting himself in a position where he will find it difficult not to sign away his soul, or at least his intellect. It is true that Carl Sandburg has kept clear of that conspiracy largely because of a revolutionary passion that does both good and had service to his talent. It sometimes inspires him to brilliant and delicate political writing. It is a curious fact that no writer of Anglo-Saxon descent, no representative of the New England tradition, has described the break between Lincoln's America and modern industrialized America so poignantly as Carl Sandburg has. But his revolutionary passion so often betrays him, for poem after poem is ruined by a coarsely intruding line that turns it from poetry to propaganda. But the effect of this resistance to his environment is in sum an æsthetic benefit. It enables him to write of the real America, which one might describe to the present-day, over-prosperous America, in words of one of its own advertisements, as "the Venus beneath your fat." In "Prairie," and "The Windy City," and "Slabs of the Sunburst West," he has evoked the essential America which will survive when this phase of commercial expansion is past and the New World is cut down to the quick as the Old West is today: a vast continent which by the majesty of its plains and its waters and its mountains, calls forth a response of power in the men who behold it, now that they are white as it did when they were red. His is not a talent that is too easily accepted in this age, which is inclined to regard poetry as necessarily lyric and to demand that the poet shall write brief and perfect verse; but the reason he cannot satisfy such standards is that his art is dominated by an image so vast that it requires as house-room not one but a thousand poems.

## Some Recent Poets

MODERN POETRY. By H. P. COLLINS.  
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1926. \$2.

Reviewed by EDWARD DAVISON

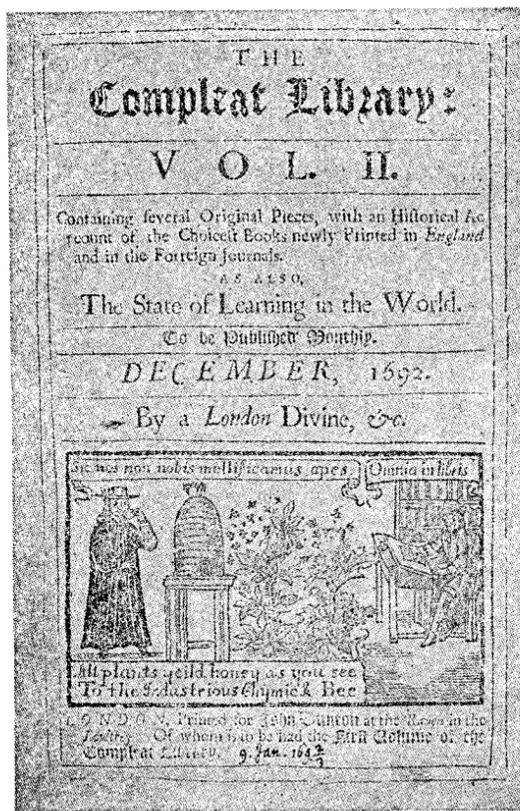
THIS stimulating little book marks the appearance in England of a new and promising critic. Mr. Collins is too intellectually honest and well informed, too sure in his taste, and too ready with critical reasons to write anything that would not be caviare to the general. He is not merely one more critic of the emotive order. Thus his book will not be popular. Perhaps, because of its excessive limitations, it must be regarded as a failure. Mr. Collins's essays in *The Criterion* (notably his study of Milton in the light of M. Saurat's theory) have already revealed him at his best when he is treating some single concrete figure, criticizing some body of work with very definite lines of demarcation. In his 200 pages on modern English poetry there is not space enough for him to see his subject steadily or to see it whole. He does not reduce confusion although, as in the excellent chapter on Wilfred Owen, he throws a searching light on some of its aspects. His great merit as a critic (although to praise it is rather like praising a shoemaker for making shoes) is that he always attempts to prove his point.

Here is no indiscriminate praise or abuse. Thus, while a disproportionate section of his book is devoted to a not wholly successful "apology" for the work of H. D., he is still frank enough to examine and explode the Imagiste manifesto whereon, avowedly, that work is based. And his book abounds in suggestive phrases that raise some vital questions for criticism, for instance—"How can the modern passion for minute psychological inquiry be made to enrich æsthetic perception; especially in poetry, the sphere of the most generalized perceptions?" And, again,—“It cannot be too often insisted that great art does not call for novel or remarkable material: it needs a serene and sensitive awareness of those significant emotional and intellectual experiences that are the same through all the ages.” Mr. Collins throws off many such ideas in passing, seldom without some resolution of their significance into the point he is momentarily making. He is at his best in the chapter on "The Need of Values," where he writes to the text "Since literature always deals *au fond* with humanity the theories in the light of which it should be viewed are humanistic."

Mr. Collins realizes from the outset that this ancient opinion, though men have attempted to refute it since literary criticism was a recognized

art, has never been effectually overturned. Thus the basis of his criticism is essentially humanistic. His plea for the recognition of humanistic values "not originally artistic, but deriving from other experience, perhaps chiefly moral" is in accord with all the judgments made throughout his book. This, together with his insistence that "modernism is not this or the last century's discovery," is the basis of an attitude which can examine the poetry of Rupert Brooke and find it sadly wanting in comparison with that of Wilfred Owen. It also strikes a powerful blow against the validity of a mere psychological theory of value. But where psychological critics, like Mr. I. A. Richards, have employed a scrupulously exact terminology, Mr. Collins often weakens his case by the employment of loose and insufficient language. He cannot or, at least, does not, meet them on their own ground: and until some champion of the humanistic theory visits them there it appears likely that their views will grow in popularity.

It is a pity that Mr. Collins did not enlarge his book to cover the activities of that very mingled group of English poets whose separate individualities are usually concealed under the now opprobrious name "Georgian." Others, too, like Herbert Trench, not of that nominal group, surely deserved some claim on his attention. There is room, at present, for a really considerable critical study of



One of the Most Notable Literary Journals of the Seventeenth Century.

From "The Beginnings of English Literary Periodicals," by Walter Graham (Oxford University Press).

recent English poetry but Mr. Collins, though he does not lack the equipment for such a task, has missed a fine opportunity to write it.

The *Woman's Home Companion* and the John Day Company, Publishers, are jointly offering prize awards of \$25,000 in cash each for the best novel written by a man and by a woman, respectively. The contest closes on July 1, 1927. In view of the fact that motion picture rights are not surrendered by the prize-winners, but may be sold separately, these are the largest cash awards for prize-winning novels ever offered.

Novels of as short a length as 50,000 words will be eligible for the competition, although "preference will be given to manuscripts of full novel length." Collaborations will be accepted, except those between men and women authors. Two or more men may join in competing for the \$25,000 prize for the best novel written by a man and two or more women may together enter the lists for the prize for women writers. In addition to the cash award the winning author will receive royalties on American and Canadian book rights in excess of the \$5,000 advance guarantee and will retain full motion picture rights, second serial rights, English rights, all rights to translation into foreign languages, and dramatic rights, relinquishing only American and Canadian book royalties under \$5,000 and first serial rights. Official entry forms will be sent to any address free upon application to the contest headquarters, the John Day Company offices, 25 West 45th Street, New York City.

## Holding Up the Mirror

A MIRROR TO FRANCE. By FORD MADOX FORD. New York: A. & C. Boni. 1926. \$2.50.

Reviewed by DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

WHATEVER else might be said about Ford Madox Ford—and in another connection a good deal might be said about him as a thinker and philosopher—he is a thoroughly trained man of letters, and (which doesn't always follow) he is seldom dull. This is too grudging by far—when he hits his stride on a familiar ground, there are few of this generation who can keep up with him. At his best he has a keen eye and a neat hand, as well as enough humor and human sympathy for setting down the scenes he have lived through; at his worst, an unbridled, rip-snorting imagination runs away with him (or so it seems to me) and bucks him off when it comes to scenes he has only dreamed about.

In "A Mirror to France," Mr. Ford is at either extreme. It is a slight effort, journalese but very high-class journalese, probably thrown off in the breathing space between more weighty work. It has nothing in it half so good as the extraordinarily well written descriptions of the muck and muddle of the British replacement camp in "No More Parades;" but nothing so disastrously green-hattish as the aphrodisiac-sadistic abstraction in the same book conjured up by Mr. Ford to play gad-fly to his Tory-English-Christian gentleman.

But if this is not, and doesn't pretend to be in any sense a great book, nevertheless it is very good reading. If you know and like France you may find it charming. Mr. Ford has lived long in France, has soaked up French atmosphere, and oozes it out on every page in graceful thumb-nail sketches of people and places, in happy turns of phrase which vividly bring back memories of French idiom. It is no record of fact, and Mr. Ford does not mean it as such. I wouldn't advise taking "A Mirror to France" with you as a philosophic guide-book on a first trip to Europe. For, as Mr. Ford himself points out, no two mirrors reflect actuality in exactly the same way; and this is a very special, personal mirror which he holds up. To my way of thinking, the glass is often wavy enough to distort the reflection; so much of the silver is off the back that in spots it fails to reflect what is going on in front of it, and shows only what is happening behind it.

This is to say, of course, that my mirror does not always agree with Mr. Ford's. But did two people's impressions of the same country ever agree? Do one's own impressions of any given country even agree among themselves? Does one not always stare, astonished, at the stories told by other people of countries one knows? For instance, I have repeatedly opened bank-accounts in French banks in many parts of France, and in every case my experience has been the diametrical opposite of what Mr. Ford sets down in this book. And yet I agree entirely with the impression conveyed by Mr. Ford in this anecdote, that French officials are outrageously fussy about their sacred official records and papers. The only difference is that I gathered that impression in connection with trying to run an automobile in France.

I do not even, in the least, doubt the literal accuracy of Mr. Ford's banking experiences, although so different from my own. All sorts of things happen, everywhere. Once, traveling with a French friend to visit Niagara Falls, we were accosted as we stepped from the sleeping-car at Buffalo, by the Station-Master in person. And what did that important official say to two plain middle-aged women, total strangers to him? He hoped we had had a good night in the sleeper, and were we on our way to Niagara Falls, because such-and-such a train was the best one to take if we wished to catch a certain effect of morning light on the Falls; and over there, on such a track was the train; and he was glad it was a fine day so that we could get the finest impression of the Falls. All this with a smile, and at the end, with a courteous, cap-lifted bow. Yes, just like that. Incredible. True. My French friend was enthusiastic about the agreeable friendly manners of this solicitous official, and I was too stupified by astonishment to speak. "Nowhere but in America could such a thing happen in a big-city station," she cried. I did not tell her that never before had I heard of

its happening in America. I have since heard her, many times, describing to a circle of French friends her experiences in the United States, tell this story as a sample of the incredible good humor and friendliness prevalent in America. And I never say a word. After all, it literally did happen, and after all the railroad officials in the United States are as a rule more friendly and approachable than French ones. Her general impression is in the right and accurate tone. And that is all one can expect from other people's travel experiences.

Personally I believe them all. No, no, I draw the line at the perfectly truthful, serious-minded, middle-aged family connection of mine who came back after three months' travel in France, and asked us seriously why French people always served canned peaches for dessert! Some things are incredible! A few. I don't know where he really was during those three months of travel, but I am certain it was not in France.

But I find no canned peaches in Mr. Ford's very readable book. I recognize—nearly enough at least—all that he sets down in his portrait of France. It is a portrait and no photograph, and hence has in it as much of the personality of the painter as of the subject. He leaves out a good deal that seems interesting to me, and occasionally sets in the middle of his foreground elements which seem rather odd to me in that position. But this is only another way of saying again that it is his book and not mine.



It would be out of all proportion to argue whether my impressions or his are more nearly accurate. Probably neither of us is really accurate. It is much better fun to lift an eyebrow, and shrug a shoulder when he tells of French banking manners, of incredibly romanescque mail-carriers, when he defines spiritual Provence in one breath to include about anything south of Glasgow, and in another, restricts it to a few rock piles near Avignon. It is better fun, and more fitting to the suave spirit of the book not to get excited by his tendency to look at everything from a seat on the extreme Right, but to turn the pages till he changes the subject (never long in his rambling discursiveness), and begins an amusing flank attack on the Nordic obsession, or a diatribe against the *quartier de l'Etoile*, or the Riviera, or the commercially stimulated gaiety of tourist night-life. It is more than fun; it is real and rare pleasure to come across passages that occasionally flash through to the root of the whole matter, such as, "For you get here (the Rive Gauche) concentrated, the efficiency, the personal dignity, the regard for the *métier*, the seriousness, the frugality, the *terre à terre*, cheerful, usable philosophy. . . ." (I find "usable" especially good.) "Women from all over the world buy their hats in Paris not merely for the chic of the design, but because the extreme care of the seamstresses of the Rive Gauche gets an exactness of line, and ensures that that exactness of line will be commensurate with the life of the hat, or at any rate of the fashion. . . . As with women's hats, so with Thought and the Arts."

Or this evocation of his beloved Provence:

I do not know whether you have ever watched a colony of lizards living upon a perpendicular rough white wall, over-topping which there will be three enormous stone-pines, pouring over which there will be branches bearing thickly young peach-blossoms, and behind the peach-blossoms the bright green shutters, the very white walls and the very red peaked roof of a very little "château de campagne." And over the whole there will be the absolutely translucent, hyacinthine bowl of the sky; and absolutely occupying every possible attention of the ear, there will be the sounds of the great mistral.

Or the delicious piece of foolery (too long to quote alas!) on page 257, with more truth in its lightness than in many treatises on national characteristics.

Or this savory appreciation of first-hand country living:

Take flowers. By mass production you can raise an infinite number of perlargoniums, petunias, polyanthus, and, for the matter of that, of primroses. But these are colored vegetables, not flowers. A flower is a frail, somewhat imperfect, charming thing that you pick, or allow to grow in your own bit of land, or along a hedge. To have in one's rooms one's own flowers, to have at table one's own fruits, one's own ducks, fowls, and other small meats—that is the highest happiness a man can know; a happiness of conquest over the stubborn earth and the inimical weather.

There are plenty of other good things in the book, a great many of them, almost on every page. But the reader must be prepared not to swallow whole the ideas in the book, nor to take any of it as the literal statement of fact which Mr. Ford

certainly did not mean it to be. Like the rest of us, he has a good many fixed theses, and like the rest of us he contrives to see mostly what will help prove his case. With most of his convictions and conclusions and many of his tastes I do not agree. I am no such lover of hot, dry, dusty, windy regions as he is, and by no means share his loathing for the "repulsive lush greenness" of districts where it occasionally rains. But I have read the book with a lively enjoyment, and heartily recommend it to other people who know their own minds.

I have only one serious quarrel with him. Why did he call his book "A Mirror to France"? A better title would be "A Mirror to Ford Madox Ford."

## Sanger's Circus

SEVENTY YEARS A SHOWMAN. By "LORD" GEORGE SANGER. With an Introduction by Kenneth Grahame. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1926.

Reviewed by M. R. WERNER  
Author of "Barnum"

"LORD" George Sanger would have hated nothing more than the characterization of him as the English Barnum, for in his book he frequently takes the trouble to point out that there are no Yankee tricks practised by showmen which were not made in England. And Barnum would have been justified in having his objections too. There are, however, many points of similarity. Both showmen had their early training with travelling attractions, both eventually managed monster circus companies, and both wrote their autobiographies.

Whatever may have been their respective merits in gate receipts, Barnum had the advantage in autobiographies. "Lord" George Sanger's reminiscences are of a quieter nature and much less brilliant. He was also of a far inferior wit. However, his book is worth reading for the knowledge it gives of certain kinds of society in England during the period which began with the ascension of Queen Victoria and ended with her death. Sanger was born in 1827; his father, after being impressed into the Navy, served with Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar, and then when the war was over, started a freak show which held its performances at the various country fairs in the English towns and villages. George Sanger literally lisped in show patter, for it was part of his work when he was less than ten years old to urge the country folk to "walk up and see the only correct views of the terrible murder of Maria Martin. They are historically accurate and true to life, depicting the death of Maria at the hands of the villain Corder in the famous Red Barn."

During the period from ten years of age to twenty George Sanger worked and travelled with his father and mother and their family all over England, exhibiting trained mice and rabbits, and fighting such hardships as plagues, ruffians, and the authorities, who believed firmly in those days that showmen were rather wicked. The attractions of these early English travelling shows were current events, such as leading murders, displayed through peep holes, a sprinkling of giants and giantesses, fortune-telling ponies, dwarfs, and Madame Stevens, "the Pig-Faced Lady," who "was really a fine brown bear, the paws and face of which were kept closely shaved." Sanger explained the deception in detail.

Conjuring in the early days of good Queen Victoria was considered part of the work of the devil, but Sanger developed the art to the fullest extent possible with his available materials. He continued to act, conjure, "bark," and perform in various other ways in his father's show, until one day he met the "exceedingly pretty" Ellen Chapman, "who was performing at Mr. George Wombwell's menagerie as Madame Pauline de Vere, the Lady of the Lions." Sanger was a hardy young man and did not consider it at all dangerous to marry a lion tamer, for he assures us that if treated with kindness the animals are never difficult. Madame Pauline de Vere after some time became Mrs. George Sanger, and Sanger now had his own travelling show.

The life of a travelling showman was made both troublesome and dangerous by the character of some of his patrons. Sanger gives this horrible picture of an occurrence at a Lancashire fair:

He seemed to be expostulating with a crowd of miners

about something, when all at once over went his stall, and the next minute he himself was under their feet with all of them kicking at him anywhere and everywhere as hard as they could.

Kicked to pulp is by no means too strong an expression, for that is what literally happened to the poor gingerbread seller. When the crowd with the kickers suddenly melted away there lay the body—I can see it now—a ghastly, shapeless thing in the clear sunlight, with the white dust of the roadway blotched here and there with purple stains.

When Sanger came up to London to give a show he hired a building in Clement's Lane, which later he discovered had been a charnel house, and more than twelve thousand bodies had been buried under the flooring. Soon after the building had been closed as a chapel, it was rented to a group of English speculators who put a brick floor over the wooden one containing the bodies and bones, and then advertised in this enticing fashion: "Enon Chapel.—Dancing on the Dead.—Admission Three pence. No lady or gentleman admitted unless wearing shoes and stockings."

Sanger continued to tour, and after many years of distressing hardship managed to make a great deal of money—enough for him to start a huge circus for London and the provinces. He now gave up such charming attractions as "The Wonderful Performing Fish and a Tame Oyster that sits by the fire and smokes his yard of clay." This consisted of a real oyster and a fake one, and a small boy sitting under the table and drawing in and exhaling smoke through rubber tubing. Sanger's big show was successful, and he hired Astley's, the historic home of English showmanship. He also operated a travelling show that toured the Continent. The Queen witnessed one of his performances, and his victory was complete. He reprints facsimiles of the letters of thanks from Her Majesty's secretary. Sanger had called himself "Lord" George—never omitting to put in the quotation marks because when he was engaged in a legal controversy with Buffalo Bill he was annoyed by the constant reference in the legal documents to the Hon. William F. Cody. He decided that if a Yankee could be Honorable, he could be at least a Lord, and in printing a show bill of the results of the case, he referred to himself as "Lord" George Sanger as often as the Hon. William F. Cody was mentioned. Sanger gives this account of his presentation to Queen Victoria:

"Never, if I live to be a thousand years old, could I forget that interview. As I straightened myself from another bow I saw the eyes of my Sovereign upon me, the gaze was full of kindness.

"In a voice singularly high, clear and penetrating, the Queen said, 'So you are Mr. Sanger?'"

"Yes, your Majesty," I replied.

"Then with a smile and a twinkle in those steadfast eyes, 'Lord' George Sanger, I believe?"

"This, with the accent on the 'Lord,' was distinctly embarrassing, but I managed to stammer out, 'Yes, if your Majesty pleases!'"

"It is very amusing," was the Royal lady's answer, 'and I gather you have borne the title very honorably!'"

"Thank you, your Majesty," I replied; 'your gracious kindness overwhelms me!'"

"Do you know, you seem very young, Mr. Sanger?"

"Yes, your Majesty," said I; 'but it may surprise you to hear that it was on the day of your Majesty's Coronation, at the fair in Hyde Park, that I put on my first performing dress.'"

"Her Majesty was appropriately astonished, and then wanted to know all about the elephants."

Sanger lived on until 1911, when he was eighty-four years old. He sold his large circus interests and retired to comparative peace and quiet, when one day a servant went mad and battered his employer to death with a hatchet.

Sanger's book was published many years ago, but this new edition contains a pleasant introduction by Kenneth Grahame, in which he gives his own reminiscences of English country fairs.

### The Saturday Review of LITERATURE

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